

by Laura Yuen, Minnesota Public Radio

St. Paul, Minn. - U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., is trying to turn up the heat on the Rwandan government over the detention of Peter Erlinder, a St. Paul law professor.

McCollum and U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn., this week introduced a resolution calling on the Rwandan government to free Erlinder. He was detained two weeks ago for allegedly denying the 1994 genocide, a charge his supporters deny.

McCollum said the Rwandan embassy in Washington D.C. hasn't responded to repeated inquiries from her office. She said that pattern could eventually jeopardize the partnership between the two countries.

"It's not damaged yet, but this is a concern I have when phone calls aren't returned, and when people definitely have health problems, and the Rwandan government has in its ability to expedite situations," she said. "We're calling on them to do that."

McCollum said U.S. aid to Rwanda totals more than a billion dollars over the past decade.

Erlinder traveled to Rwanda to defend an opposition leader accused of "genocide ideology."